

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD
Training and Education Committee
Monday, May 12, 2014

A meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Training and Education Committee was held at the Virginia Department of Fire Programs Headquarters in Glen Allen, VA at 10:00 am. Mr. Jeffrey Bailey served as Chair.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Bailey Chair - VA Chapter of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors

Richard E. Burch Jr. – Chairman of VFSB – Virginia Fire Services Council

Charles ‘Ed’ Altizer – Virginia State Fire Marshal

Walter Bailey – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

Edwin Smith – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

James “Robby” Dawson – Fire Prevention Association

Mark Osborn – Industry (SARA Title III & OSHA) Representative

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Brook M. Pittinger

Russ Chandler

Don Hansen

Mohamed G. Abbamin

Dave Jolly

GUESTS PRESENT

Larry Gwaltney

David Layman

Steve Kopczynski

Chris Shaver

Charlie Singleton

Richard Harris

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Fire Education and Training Committee Business

A. ROLL CALL

B. SIGN-IN SHEET FOR GUESTS

C. CHANGES IN AGENDA

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Training Overview

i. Pro Board Reciprocity

ii. Attendance Policy (10%)

iii. Pre-registration for all programs

- iv. MOU between VDFP and VDEM regarding Hazmat Awareness and Operations Program

E. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Restructure of the Training Committee (purpose/responsibilities)
- b. Stakeholder input

F. ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Chairman of the Training and Education Committee, Jeff Bailey thanked everyone for their attendance and proceeded with the agenda. The following items were added to the agenda under New Business, Instructor II Pilot in Augusta County, Firefighters I and II and Train-the-Trainer via online versus in-class sessions, discussion on Southwest Virginia Firefighters Association's letter.

FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**Unfinished Business
Training Overview**

Topic: Pro-Board Reciprocity

Motion: To accept the wording/language from the Attorney General's Office in reference to reciprocity.

Topic Discussion: As discussed at the full VFSB meeting in February 21, 2014 the following is a highlight of Pro-Board Reciprocity;

Concern: Local fire department leaders have expressed that the current five-year requirement from the date of submission is keeping good members from able to actively participating in their respective organization.

Solution: VDFP will revise the policy to allow for local fire department to submit request on their department letterhead, signed by the Fire Chief to accept the certification, provided the certificate has either a Pro-Board or IFSAC seal. VDFP will enter the certificate into the FSTRS system with the note that the local fire department accepted the certificate.

Dave Jolly provided the following as the current policy; "Any person who moves to Virginia and can provide a certificate(s) of training dated within five (5) years from a state that is recognized by the National Professional Qualifications Board or similarly nationally recognized organization will be recognized at that level by VDFP without having to take the

Virginia examinations. If a certification is dated more than five years from the date of submittal it will not be considered for reciprocity or challenge testing, regardless if it was issued by another state that is recognized by the National Professional Qualifications Board, it will be considered as having expired and the person will be required to commence training again at the lowest level for that professional skill. Reciprocity can only be issued for courses that VDFP is currently accredited to teach. VDFP does not issue reciprocity for Fire Inspector, Fire Investigator and Hazardous Materials programs.”

As suggested during the February 21, 2014 board meeting, opinion was sought from the Virginia Attorney General’s Office. The following language was provided;

Language from Attorney General: “Any person who is affiliated and in good standing with a Virginia Fire Department and can provide a certificate(s) of training dated January 1, 1993, or later, from a state that is recognized by the National Professional Qualifications Board or similarly nationally recognized organization will be recognized under certain conditions by VDFP at that level of certification(s). Such certificate holder will not be required to take the Virginia examinations provided the certificate(s) have been approved by the Fire Chief of the Virginia Department with which that person is affiliated. The Fire Chief shall provide to VDFP a letter of request for reciprocity on Fire Department letterhead with the Fire Chief’s signature. Reciprocity can only be issued for courses that VDFP is currently accredited to teach. VDFP does not issue reciprocity for Fire Inspector and Fire Investigator.”

[Enclosure 1]

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: To be forwarded to the full board meeting scheduled for Friday, June 6, 2014.

Topic: Attendance Policy (10%)

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: As discussed at the full VFSB meeting in February 21, 2014 the following is a highlight of the Attendance Policy (10%);

Concern: The concern on this topic was the amount (number of classes) an individual can miss.

Solution: Proposed solution was as follows: attendance policy to allow students to miss up to 15% of the required classroom training and to require the student to attend 100% of the practical skills training. A student may make up coursework that falls below the required attendance policy given the student makes up the missed training in an equivalent

manner. A student must successfully complete all make up hours prior to eligibility for the final testing.

Larry Gwaltney added that some courses require students to make up courses before they proceed to the next level. Dave Jolly stated that two day classes have no time to make up especially due to the length of the courses.

Jeff Bailey stated that as an instructor, he sees students missing a lecture on the ladder part of the course, but then the student attends the practical. Therefore, in situations like that a student has not had the opportunity to gain the fundamentals on a topic and is thus unable to safely perform the practical.

Mr. Jolly gave the following example, since an instructor is teaching Tuesday and Wednesday with a practical scheduled for Saturday, students who miss lessons have Wednesday and Thursday to do a make-up session. However, this raises the issue of scheduling because the instructor will have to clear their schedule to re-teach another two days which were not scheduled or accounted for.

Russ Chandler brought up the issue creates fiscal complexity.

Edwin Smith pointed out that the students have ownership and therefore must take responsibility. Although we can be flexible, there needs to be accountability on their part.

Larry Gwaltney suggested having backup instructors. In regards to flexibilities, he stated that students can proceed with online make-up and thus there must be multiple of ways of teaching.

Don Hansen indicated that the material has always been online. Brook Pittinger added that the agency will proceed on improving the methods of informing the stakeholders.

Brook Pittinger proposed using VFIRS / ATL funds to purchase computers for training. She indicated that modifications will be made to the aforementioned programs to allow computer accessibility.

A discussion ensued regarding internet accessibility. Walter Bailey stated some of his stations do not have access to internet. Ed Altizer asked if the VFIRS/ATL would allow for localities to get hotspot. Brook Pittinger suggested for localities to utilize Virginia GSA's data contract.

Brook Pittinger will further look into this matter and an update will be provided at the June 6, 2014 full board meeting.

Richard Burch proposed between now and the June 6th full board meeting, VDFP should research the statistics that exhibit how attendance impacts the students' ability to pass courses. Therefore, an educated decision can be made during the June 6th board meeting.

Richard Burch also suggested utilizing samples. The following are the question VDFP staff will look into;

- a. How many classes had attendance issue (more than 10% missed sessions)?
- b. Out of those missing classes, how many failed the respective course?

The committee agreed to forward the concern to the August 2014 meeting since it will allow VDFP staff sufficient time to conduct the research.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Pre-registration for all programs

Motion: NA

Topic Discussion: The following is a background on the matter:

Concern: There are students who attend programs without pre-registering. The lack of pre-registration does not allow instructors to see in advance if the student has met the pre-requisites required.

Solution: VDFP's solution is as follows: as of July 2014 – all programs with pre-requisite requirements conducted by VDFP will require students to do a pre-registration to validate students meet the required prerequisites to attend. It was further added that VDFP will change the language of the pre-registration to indicate walk in students will be allowed. They can participate or sit in the class. Those students must fill out the application to attend the class on the first day and it will include a form for the student to sign stating they meet the prerequisites. Application forms will be forwarded to the Division Office as soon as possible and the student's records will be checked to assure they meet the prerequisites for that class. If they do not have the pre-requisites then they will be asked to leave the class, or if it is a two or three day school they will not get credit for attending nor will they get a certificate. Disclosure will be provided in advance before class starts.

It was also discussed that walk in students will be permitted up to the allowed class size for the number of instructors present to conduct the school. Instructor student ratios are safety factors that must be adhered to in all classes requiring such.

VDFP will modify the language and forwarded new information to the full board meeting.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: MOU between VDFP and VDEM regarding Hazmat Awareness and Operations Program

Motion: NA

Topic Discussion: Richard Burch indicated that an agreement has been signed between VDFP and VDEM.

Jeff Bailey asked about the timeline for resolving/accepting IFSTA, Jones and Bartlett along with other materials.

Dave Jolly stated the NFPA 472, the guideline VDFP is under has a new edition that will be in effect by July 2014.

Mr. Jolly stated that VDFP will modify their normal practice, thus the agency will put a team together to evaluate the new standard. There will be some modification made in order to meet the new JPR format. The agency is also looking internally at how the development team is selected. Mr. Jolly added that there will be challenges at all levels.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

New Business

Topic: Restructure of the Training Committee (purpose/responsibilities)

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: Richard Burch stated that the training committee was previously gradually dissolved. It was only reconstituted when there were training matters that needed to be evaluated. He suggested that the committee consider to meet on a regular base and to also ensure access and participation of stakeholders. Mr. Burch further asked the stakeholders the subjects/issues they would like to come to the attention of the committee.

Dave Layman stated that he appreciates the current format and would recommend that the Training & Education Committee continue with their meetings prior to the full board meeting to allow participation in providing feedback.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Stakeholder Input

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: Richard Burch asked to what capacity the stakeholders' would be interested in participating on the committee. Richard Harris added that stakeholder's do not need to be participants on the training committee but the methods used within the past couple of months meets the stakeholders' needs.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Instructor II Pilot (Augusta County)

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: Russ Chandler indicated that during a recent pilot school, VDFFP received a complaint reference one student failing the course based on final project (written report) not sufficient for a passing grade. The course as designed by the Committee reportedly provided no recourse after that one failed attempt. It was added by the student that there are no other courses which fail a student after one test. This issue is being investigated and addressed by the Division Chief in charge of that program area and with the assistance of the QA Chief.

Chandler further stated that the course is being offered in pilot. As such, it is still in the design mode. The development committee by desing will review the course material and feedback, then will make adjustments to the program to refine and improve. In this case, the committee will be advised that agency management will not want to have any testing mechanism that does not allow at least one retest attempt, for both written projects, skills or testing.

Captain Chris Shaver, Augusta County Fire-Rescue provided concerns brought to their attention. Below are highlights of the concerns raised by students;

Student 1: The student stated the materials covered in Firefighter II – 8th Edition was taught too speedy without consideration on student's ability to absorb the information.

Student 2: The student stated there was not feedback from the instructor. Students were failed without reasons. The concern in this case was regarding having two chances for written test but only one for the project.

Student 3: The lead instructor needed to improve on their communication method with the students. The student further indicated the instructor should have been at the test site.

Student 4: There was distinct lack of consensus among the instructors. There was also inconsistency on how the final project should be developed. Lastly, the student was frustrated with the lack of established criteria for the selection of a final project topic.

Student 5: The lack of feedback for the project did not allow the student to get an understanding on the areas they needed to improve.

Student 6: Applauds the efforts of VDFP but the instructors created a negative environment which made it difficult for students to pass.

Dave Jolly stated in regards to the final project, VDFP is looking for a solution to accommodate students.

Russ Chandler, Don Hansen and Dave Jolly are collectively looking into methods to improve the issues raised above.

[Enclosure 2]

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Firefighter I and II and Train-the-Trainer via online vs. Classroom

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: Russell Chandler provided the following information; recently during the release of the “Train the Trainer” (TtT) for the Firefighter I & II, the agency honored the request that the development team deliver the TtT themselves to assure that VDFP have a consistent delivery across the commonwealth.

The Division Chief and subsequently the Branch Chief agreed. However, it became clear that the committee members could not meet the needs of the fire service with these “in person” in class sessions since the agency currently has over 1,400 current instructors for Firefighter I & II that need this training.

With continued reports from the departments that they needed to start their new updated training, and having come nowhere near reaching the number of instructors necessary to make this happen, it was decided to release the TtT to the Knowledge Center to make sure VDFP can get this vital training into the field where it was immediately needed.

Larry Gwaltney advised that he appreciated the situation and commended the agency for taking the steps necessary to make this move to put it on the Knowledge Center and for being forthright in the comments on what and why this happened.

Chief Kopczynski added that, as for consistency, using the course on the Knowledge Center is a great way to make sure the information is delivered consistently across the state to our instructors.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Southwest Virginia Letter from Firefighter's Association

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: A letter was received from the Southwest Virginia Firefighters Association. The letter states that there are five issues that must be brought up to the attention of the training and education committee;

1. Pre-requisite for training thru the VDFP. The stakeholders' are concerned that the current pre-requisite for training is keeping members from enrolling in class that would be beneficial to their respective nearby department.
2. The current Hazardous Material Awareness and Operations class failure rates. The stakeholders' stated the current hazmat class taught by VDFP needs to be evaluated and redeveloped. It is also mentioned that the high failure rate and the number firefighters that are having to retake the test or are not passing are getting frustrating.
3. Role of Pro-Board Certification in Virginia, the stakeholders' would like clarification and definition of the pro-board standards in regards to the current training program.
4. Length of the current firefighter I program. The stakeholders' are concerned about the number of hours that make up the current firefighter I course.
5. The development of continuing education. The stakeholders suggest for the fire services board to stay current on the new training material or techniques.

The committee has taken the matters above into consideration. Items 1 to 4 have already been discussed. VDFP staff will draft a response.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

Topic: Training Overview

Motion: N/A

Topic Discussion: Richard Burch asked if the course will be held. Chief Jolly indicated that the meeting / training overview has been scheduled for Thursday, June 5, 2014 beginning at 2 pm.

The meeting will be at the VDFP Headquarters office in Glen Allen. The three topics to be covered are:

- The method/methods in which VDFP Develops Programs.
- The Influence of NFPA Standards on VDFP trainings.
- The Influence of Pro-Board and other accrediting agencies on the development, delivery and evaluation of VDFP Programs.

Vote: N/A

Motion Action: N/A

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned at 12:33pm.

Clerk of the Committee
Mohamed G. Abbamin

REVIEWED BY:

Russell K. Chandler

Russell K. Chandler, Branch Chief
Operations Branch

May 12, 2014

Enclosures:

1. VDFP PowerPoint – **Enclosure 1**
2. Augusta County Fire-Rescue Letter – **Enclosure 2**
3. Southwest Virginia Letter from Firefighter's Association – **Enclosure 3**